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# HARVARD THEOLOGICAL REVIEW

VOLUME VII

APRIL, 1914

NUMBER 2

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## SOCIAL PROGRESS AND RELIGIOUS FAITH<sup>1</sup>

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There are not a few circles in our day in which social progress and religious faith are regarded as being in at least a semi-unfriendly relation. The leaders in the cause of the industrial classes indeed, like the Social Democrats and the Syndicalists, often thoroughly denounce religion. Workers for general social amelioration are frequently indifferent to religious faith. Great masses of people are convinced that religion does not help toward social progress and so regard it as at best a dead weight upon society. On the other hand, when churches or religious groups become vigorously active for social progress, the alarm is sure to be raised that their religion is becoming "mere social ethics." When social topics are considered in the pulpit or at the mid-week service, the fear is expressed that real religion is being crowded out. When religious leaders throw themselves into social causes, they are suspected of having lost faith in "spiritual" forces. Not infrequently we hear people say that they are "tired of the social uplift"; though it is barely more than a decade since there arose any wide-spread interest in our country in social questions.

<sup>1</sup> Address of installation as professor of philosophy of religion and Christian ethics in Oberlin Theological Seminary, September 25, 1913.

Even those who regard such positions as extreme are yet doubtful as to how much relation there should be between the two interests in question. They are apt to feel that, while social progress and religious faith have their points of contact, they also are often divergent, and that each may flourish very well without the other. In fact, the question of their relation is precisely one of the points where people are conscious of confusion of thought, and, consequently, of hesitancy in action.

There are certain underlying notions which go far toward explaining this confusion and hesitancy and the more extreme attitudes as well. It is these underlying notions that we are especially to take up for consideration.

In the first place, according to a widely prevalent view religion is inherently conservative.<sup>2</sup> This is a view which both the social worker and the defender of faith are apt to share. Let us listen to the way that the defender of faith is likely to put the matter: "Religion," he will say, "is not by nature progressive but conservative. It does not invent the new; it cherishes the old. It does not explore the unknown; it venerates the true and tried and well-known. Its work is not to originate but to consecrate, not to construct but to conserve, not to disturb the souls of men with infusions of energy, but to soothe them with anointings of peace."

"There is," the defender of faith may add, "a psychology supporting this view. Religion is a matter of feeling and instinct, and these are essentially conservative functions. The progressive, constructive faculties are the reason and the will, and the fruit of their activity is science and morality. The movements of the religious consciousness are different and betray a different origin. Religion broods and meditates, grows contrite, pleads,

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Baldwin's "Mental Development, Social and Ethical Interpretations," chap. X; and Marshall's "Instinct and Reason," chaps. VIII-XII.

adores. Such currents of emotion must have familiar objects around which to flow. Thus religion, having its source in the conservative side of our natures, must work predominantly as a conservative influence upon humanity."

But the worker for social progress, accepting this theory of religion, often goes farther. He says that because religion is conservative it is also obstructive. It gets in the way of progress, and is frequently found fighting against it. It anathematizes the progressive spirits and places upon the reactionary the robes of authority. And even where it does not take active measures adverse to progress, it still acts as a dead weight, a massive pressure in favor of things as they are.

One who takes this view will claim that the facts are on his side. He will point to the long "warfare between science and theology," and to the present attitude of hostility or timidity towards "modernism." He will point to those countries which are progressing towards fuller democracy as the ones in which the working classes are alienated from the church, and in which the church is inclined to support vested interests; and on the other hand he will point to the lands of reaction and oppression as those where religion has the undisturbed faith of the common people, and where the church is an instrument for keeping them in bondage. Thus he will urge that the facts themselves show religion to be both inherently conservative and practically obstructive.

The array of facts which the social worker who is distrustful of religion can summon for his justification is so formidable that it raises the question whether the theory on which the facts are being interpreted is sound, and whether the defender of faith, in admitting that theory, does not surrender his own cause. *Is* religion really conservative in its essence, and thus liable to be

obstructive in its workings? This is a question which we must consider carefully, if we are to gain a clearer understanding of our subject.

But, before taking up this question, another underlying notion must be indicated which helps to explain the idea of a semi-unfriendly relation between the cause of social progress and that of religious faith, and also the confusion of thought as to what the relation really should be.

This other underlying thought is that religion, being a relation between the soul and God, is essentially individual. It must have, to be sure—every one would hasten to add—its social expression in churches and forms of worship; but this social expression is apt to be thought of as being primarily for the sake of fostering the individual experience, which alone is religion. It must have too its social expression in the shape of an influence upon the moral activities of society. But this is understood as a product of religion, often only a by-product; this social activity is not something in and through which one has religious experience. So, after all, religion is something that might very well flourish without any social progress at all.

Here too the social worker and the defender of faith are apt to agree in theory. The one as well as the other is ready to assume that religion *per se* is an individual matter. But their very agreement becomes the source of a new estrangement. The worker for social progress is disposed to leave religion as a matter of individual concern out of account. Of course where this is done for temporary and immediately practical reasons, as in the case of many social settlements which are dealing with conflicting faiths, no exception can be taken. But often the social worker goes much farther and disregards religion altogether. He is likely to look upon religion as an elective in the curriculum of human education, which

fewer and fewer will take. He is disposed to think of the sphere of religion as being determined by taste, temperament, type of mind, rather than social need.

But frequently the social worker goes even beyond this neutral position and takes an aggressively hostile attitude toward religion. We find him insisting that religion, being individual, fails in what it claims as its own special work—the salvation of mankind. Man, he maintains, is a product of social conditions, of heredity and environment. He is played upon by many and complex social influences, which really determine what the individual man shall be. Hence in order to save the individual we must save society. This is a work that must be done by social forces. Consequently, religion is a negligible matter.

To all this the defender of faith raises a vigorous protest. He insists that society will never be saved until we save the individuals who make it up. And the salvation of each individual is a personal question. It requires conversion—a change of heart and a reformation of will. Of course, the converted man should be active for social ends, according to his ability. But the mainspring of such activity must be an inward experience of salvation. Hence the defender of faith urges, "Save the individual, and social progress will take care of itself."

Here again the fact of opposition in practical policy suggests that there may be a defect in the common underlying theory. Is religion at all adequately described when it is said to be essentially individual? When we say that true religion is inward and personal, should we assume this to mean that intrinsically religion is something quite different from the social side of our experience, so that social activity is an external product, or even a by-product, of religion? Clearly, these are matters that our theme requires us seriously to consider.

If then we are to do anything toward removing confusion of thought as to what should be the relation between social progress and religious faith, these two fundamental questions present themselves: Is religious faith essentially conservative, and hence, as many social workers claim, largely obstructive of social progress? And is religious faith inherently individual, and hence, as many defenders of faith insist, bound to make the salvation of individuals its chief direct object?

## I.

In considering these questions, let us turn first to the facts themselves. We already have indicated the kind of facts which are brought forward to show the alleged conservative and individual nature of religion. But there are other facts of a most important character which lead to the opposite conclusion. Indeed they are of such weight that we may say: *Religious faith at its best, and therefore in its inherent nature, is a powerful force for social progress.*

The evidence which is earliest in origin and most striking in nature for this vital relation is to be found in prophetic religion; and by prophetic religion I mean particularly the religion of the great Hebrew prophets. No one will question that in the prophet we see religion at its best. His clearness of vision, his ardor and purity of passion, his sweep, intensity, and self-abandon—these, in our highest moments, we covet with all our souls. Other religious types often become names of disapproval. The priest, the pharisee, the ecclesiast, the puritan, or even the mystic, may at times denote what is defective and unideal. But the prophet has become a synonym of the highest character and clearest faith. The prophet is the religious type that can fully meet the requirements for leadership in the modern world. And

it is one of the great new insights of today that the prophet is a practical ideal for us all. It is of the utmost moment therefore to note the manner in which the prophet's religious experience was attained.

The distinctly prophetic consciousness of God formed itself under the pressure of social injustice. It was the luxury, license, and extortion by which the strong victimized the weak that most aroused their holy resentment. It was the misery, degradation, and oppression which the weak suffered at the hands of the strong that called forth their divinest compassion. Listen to the relentless denunciation of social wrong by Amos: "For they know not to do right, saith Jehovah, who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith Jehovah."<sup>3</sup> Or hear the heart-wrung wail of the compassionate Hosea: "There is nought but swearing and breaking faith and killing and stealing and committing adultery."<sup>4</sup> Isaiah, in his turn, utters his outraged protest against the Jewish princes: "What mean ye that ye crush my people and grind the face of the poor?" And then with pitiless irony he depicts the luxurious women of Jerusalem, who are "haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet," and enumerates all their apparatus of luxury—"the headtires, and the ankle chains, and the sashes, and the perfume boxes, and the amulets."<sup>5</sup> And Micah makes the same bitter complaint: "Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! When the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields and seize them, and houses and take them away." "The prince asketh, and the judge is ready for a reward; and the

<sup>3</sup> Amos 3 10, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Hos. 4 2.

<sup>5</sup> Isa. 3 15, 20.



great man, he uttereth the evil desire of his soul. Thus they weave it together. The best of them is as a brier; the most upright is worse than a thorn hedge.”<sup>6</sup>

These passionate utterances of the Hebrew prophets reveal the direction in which the mighty currents of their religious life poured themselves out. Every great new form of religious consciousness has some ideal to which the sense of God gives reality and motive power. In some forms of religion the ideal is philosophic and cosmic; it represents predominantly the order of nature and man’s harmony with nature. In other forms it is psychological and has to do with reuniting a divided self or curing a sick soul. But the ideal of the prophets was primarily social. It aimed at securing righteous and humane relations among men and reforming the social order. This social ideal is what gave shape to that consciousness of God which we recognize as loftiest and most intense, and as having the most meaning for our day.

But the prophet does not simply make a passive protest against the existing social order. He actively seeks to reform it. Other religious types—the Hindu, the monastic, the quietist—react from social disorder by seeking to withdraw from it and to lead a separate life according to their own ideals. Not so the prophet. His sense of God launches him against social injustice. The symbol of the prophet’s religious consciousness is the plumb-line of Amos’s vision. By his consciousness of God’s righteousness he finds the political and social life of his people out of plumb. Then he remonstrates, pleads, arraigns, condemns, scourges, sparing no class—neither princes nor aristocracy nor men of wealth nor judges nor priests—sparing no institution or practice—neither business nor luxurious living nor courts of justice nor the customs of the sanctuary—pouring out his soul in his effort to make his people know the righteousness of God

<sup>6</sup> Micah 2 1, 2; 7 3, 4.

as the law between man and man. In brief, the religion of the prophet made the man himself a mighty social force. He knew no life with God which could keep apart from the service of men. The deepest nature of God was expressed in his will for righteousness among men, in his judgment upon social injustice, in his compassion toward the weak and oppressed. The experience of such a God as this was inseparable from the effort to make his will prevail in the social order. If the Hebrew prophet may be taken as embodying the highest type of prophetic religion, then that form of religion is in its deepest nature a social force.

There are, however, social types of religion which are backward-looking. Such most notably is the Confucian religion. This faith, as we know, exalts the social order to the highest place. But the social order thus exalted is that of the remote past. In by-gone ages is to be found fully embodied the ideal to which the present must live up. As for the present social order, it needs to be mended rather than re-formed. It is not to be developed but maintained. Now in contrast to all this the prophetic type of religion, as is shown by the Hebrew prophets, is forward-looking. It aims to re-form, to reconstruct. Its ideal is in the future. This is largely because prophetism is more religious than Confucianism. Since the living, active will of God is a present reality for the Hebrew prophet, the prevailing state of things has to his mind no finality. For the Hebrew prophet the ultimate fact is not an existing social order, but a supreme spiritual power willing a better social order.

Great constructive work resulted from prophetism. The thorough-going reform under Josiah, embodied in Deuteronomy, was such a result. The preservation in the Exile of the nation's faith, and the reconstruction of the Jewish state, taken in the large, are products

of the prophetic spirit. Even in the denunciations of the great pre-exilic prophets the constructive motive was underlying. In the first chapter of Isaiah, known as "the great arraignment," we find this message from the Lord to Jerusalem: "I will turn my hand upon thee, and thoroughly purge away thy dross. . . . Afterward thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, a faithful town." The prophetic union of denunciation with the constructive motive receives its classical expression in Jeremiah's vision of the two baskets of figs. While Zedekiah and those still in Jerusalem are denounced as being like the basket of very bad figs, "which cannot be eaten, they are so bad," for the captives in Babylonia there is a message of hope. They are the basket of good figs, "like the figs which are first-ripe," and Jehovah will bring them back again to their own land. Thus the prophetic spirit demanded not only the vindication of God's righteousness through judgment, but also its realization through mercy. No sooner was the destruction of the unrighteous order accomplished than the construction of the righteous order was to ensue.

This fundamental constructive purpose of the prophet finds full expression in the great ideal which he gave to the world—the ideal of the kingdom of God. In this ideal are gathered up all the prophetic motives. By it the Christian faith was cradled. Through it the best spirit of our modern time finds expression. But the permanently constructive character of this ideal, as of the prophetic type of religion in all its aspects, was given to it by Jesus. In Jesus we find that climax of Hebrew prophetic religion by which it becomes world-religion, and in him we find eternal expression of the motives for social progress. If then we are to appreciate the full value of prophetic religion as a social force, we must turn to Jesus' thought of the kingdom of God.

Jesus universalized the idea of the kingdom. He made the conditions for entrance into it not political but moral. He described the qualities of its members not as Jewish but as human. He depicted its activities not as violent and retributive, but as spiritual, righteous, and beneficent. In the Roman centurion, in the Syro-phenician woman, in the Samaritan portrayed as acting in a neighborly way to one of his Jewish despisers, in the publican and outcast who were eager for his message he saw more hopeful citizens of the kingdom than in the religious models of his people. Indeed he declared, "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth."<sup>7</sup> Like the scientist of today, who everywhere in nature sees forces where we see only inert objects, so Jesus saw universal human values where his fellows saw only caste and custom. In his work of establishing the kingdom he swept away all barriers which stood in the way of the simple claims of human life.

But Jesus did more than this consummating of the prophetic work. He universalized the prophetic consciousness itself; that is, he opened to everyone the same sense of God's nearness and power, the same sense of having an inspiration and a mission direct from God, which the ancient prophets had. He declared that the least in the kingdom of God was greater than John the Baptist. He showed that all who were ready for the life of love were sons of God. He said that everyone who did God's will was most deeply akin to himself—"the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." He found that the deeper truth was hidden from the wise and understanding, and revealed unto babes. By every resource of thought, imagination, and example he sought to bring to his fellow-men, of whatever type, that imme-

<sup>7</sup> Mt. 8 11, 12.

diate experience of God which is the possession of the prophet.

But this is only one side of the prophetic type of religion, and it is only one side of Jesus' work. We commonly express this side by saying that Jesus made religion personal and inward, that he completed the individualizing of religion. But the other side of prophetic religion, the social side, was no less characteristic of Jesus. And with him the two sides are, if anything, more closely related than with the Old Testament prophets. For the content of his individual religion itself was social. All his central ideas have the most direct social meaning. The thought of God's Fatherhood as that of a loving will working towards universal human good, the thought of man's sonship as a sharing in the work of that loving will, the ideal of the neighbor, of the physician, of greatness through service—all these blend religion and social life most intimately. Hence individual religion for him meant also individualizing social responsibility. In his work of universalizing the religious consciousness of the prophets he kept together their sense of God and their social goal. Infinite sources of truth and power were available for every soul, but only as used to meet social need. The sense of God and the service of men were inseparable.

But the full measure of the union which Jesus effected between the life with God and the service of men is not to be learned simply from his teaching. It can be learned only from his life and deeds. Jesus subordinated himself to the kingdom. He did not put himself first; he put the triumph of God's will among men first. He fought injustice. He launched himself against that form of social wrong with which he was directly confronted—religious caste feeling. He hung the millstone of his wrath about the neck, not of the sinner in general, but of the man who was sinning against the weak. He

died not only to save men from sinning, but to save them from being sinned against. So also he poured out his mercy, his healing power, his message of forgiveness, upon the helpless and hopeless multitudes. With every resource of mind and heart he strove to open the door of the kingdom to those against whom it had been shut by the Pharisees. To banish fear and anxiety from timorous, harrowed minds, to awaken faith in benumbed souls, to unearth the deeper, better self in the worldly and irreligious, to shepherd the mass of common people—for these ends he unreservedly spent his power. Thus he became the embodiment of the ultimate law of the social order; namely, free self-sacrifice by those who possess spiritual values in order to make those values available for others. The cross itself is the symbol of this ultimate social law. It is the emblem of the supreme life given to create life. It stands for the losing of life to impart a gospel and to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

Thus the facts about prophetic religion—that type originating with the Hebrew seers and transformed into a world-religion by Jesus—amply support the position taken at the outset of this discussion. They make strongly for the conclusion that religion is not essentially a conservative tendency, and that it is not individual in such a sense that it may thrive apart from social interests, but that, taken at its best, it is a powerful force for social progress.

But in maintaining this position we need not confine ourselves to the beginnings of our faith. There are important facts in modern religious life which make for the same conclusion. Consider, for example, that movement which must rank as one of the most important characteristics of our religious life in the last hundred years—the development of liberal Christianity. The leaders of this movement have been distinguished

no less for their social spirit than for their liberalizing work. In fact, these two sides of their influence seem to be most intimately related. So that we may say, a powerful force for social progress appears again in modern liberal religion.

Let us note the relation of some of the leaders of liberal religion to social progress. William Ellery Channing must be counted one of the chief originators of the humanitarian and philanthropic movements in our country in the early part of the last century. He was foremost in promoting the causes of anti-slavery, of temperance, of humane treatment of criminals, of diminishing poverty, of promoting peace, and of elevating the laboring classes. An early entry in his journal, where he makes a list of "things to be done in town," reads like the most modern program of social betterment. And into all his strenuous activity in these directions he carried a devout Christian spirit and a truly prophetic consciousness. Speaking of God's call to social reform, he said: "In thus calling us, he imposes on us a burden such as the ancient prophets groaned under. We must 'drink of the cup' and 'be baptized with the baptism' of our Master."<sup>8</sup> Horace Bushnell, from whom flows so broad a stream of influence for liberal religion, was foremost in civic progress in Hartford, and one who maintained that "politics are under the law of God." Professor Walker writes of him: "As a citizen he was a man of far-reaching vision and inspiring leadership."<sup>9</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, of whom Lyman Abbott says that "he probably did more than any other man in America" to lead the Puritan churches into a faith both vital and liberal, was foremost in the anti-slavery struggle—making public opinion, counselling with statesmen, and

<sup>8</sup> Channing's *Life*, centenary memorial edition, by W. H. Channing, pp. 131 and 457.

<sup>9</sup> *Great Men of the Christian Church*, p. 362.

fighting another Gettysburg for the cause of the Union on the platforms of England.

Or among Englishmen think of Frederick Denison Maurice, one of the chief channels for the liberalizing influence of Coleridge, and at the same time the originator of Christian Socialism and founder of the Workingmen's College in London, the precursor of the university settlements, Toynbee Hall and Oxford Hall, and so of the social settlement movement. Or recall Charles Kingsley, typical of the men who rallied around Maurice, who gave ardent support to social causes both on the platform and by his articles and novels. Or consider Frederick W. Robertson, not so much the initiator of a movement as a preacher of unrivalled power with the working classes, consuming his strength during those brief but wonderful six years at Brighton in organizing a Workingmen's Institute, which against much opposition he carried through successfully.

Finally, bring to mind the group of leaders of the present day in our own country—more impressive because more numerous—who stand for liberal religion and social progress: President Tucker, founder of the Andover House in Boston; Professor Peabody with his pioneer courses in Harvard on Christian social ethics; Washington Gladden, early and valiant champion of the cause of labor; and others now in the full tide of their activity, of whom Graham Taylor, Charles R. Brown, and Walter Rauschenbusch are but shining examples. The direct social service of these men is very great. Their influence as leaders in the churches is still greater. But what we especially should not fail to note is the ardent religious impulse present in their social endeavor. The powerful nature of this impulse may be felt, for example, in these words of Rauschenbusch, from his last book, *Christianizing the Social Order*: "Were you ever converted to God?" he asks. "Do you remember the



change in your attitude to the world? Is not this new life [the movement for social righteousness] which is running through our people, the same great change on a national scale? This is religious energy, rising from the depth of that infinite spiritual life in which we all live and move and have our being. This is God.”<sup>10</sup>

Not all liberal theology, we must admit, can be counted on to share the social motive. Professor Gerald B. Smith, in his recent and notable book, *Social Idealism and the Changing Theology*, points out as “one of the chief dangers which lies before us in our efforts to reconstruct our theology,” that the work be too exclusively scientific and intellectual and too remote from social interests.<sup>11</sup> But where real liberal religion is present—that is, religion greater, deeper, fuller than even the best forms of thought and institution can contain—there is abundant evidence that one of its chief characteristics is a progressively social spirit.

But we must turn for a moment to another group of facts closely connected with those just considered. This group of facts is furnished by modern missionary activity. In modern missionary religion we may also see a powerful force for social progress. The entering wedge of missions is often the definitely philanthropic work of the physician and the hospital. Dr. Peter Parker “opened China at the point of the lancet.” After many years in China a certain civil engineer, who professed little personal interest in religion but who was most friendly to missionaries, said in my hearing that the work of a single hospital in China would justify all the money spent on missions there. The Moslem understands the ministry of the physician when his mind is closed to every other form of the Christian message. The Boxer rioter who was Dr. Watson’s first patient in Shansi learned unmistakably what “love for enemies” means. Philanthropic work is thus a most significant part of the missionary enterprise.

<sup>10</sup> Page 6.

<sup>11</sup> Page xviii.

Missionary education, in turn, is unmistakably social in its consequences. The school and college change the social status of women, and give both sexes a new sense of the worth of personality. From these educational influences movements for political liberty have flowed, with the most astonishing results. This appears directly in the securing of Bulgarian liberties a generation ago, and in the recent establishment of the Republic of China, and less directly in the case of other Asiatic countries. Finally comes the effort of missionaries to transform the economic life of the people among whom they labor, by agricultural and industrial schools and the introduction of machinery.

Leading missionaries explicitly adopt the point of view of social progress in propagating Christianity. So Dr. Hume in *Missions from the Modern View* argues for the sociological approach to missions. We find him affirming: "The missionary—whether recent or long in the land—is sure to do some injury to himself and to his work and to his people if he fails to realize the fundamental laws which have always controlled and should control all social and religious progress."<sup>12</sup> Not infrequently missionaries are influential advisers of statesmen, as was Dr. DeForest of Japan. Sometimes they have the shaping of entire policies, as in the case of the new educational system of Turkey. Sometimes they even construct the entire life of a people, as did Mackay in Uganda. But in so vast a field we can only suggest; the present argument has been given monumental expression in Dr. Dennis's *Christian Missions and Social Progress*.

Thus the notions that religion is essentially conservative, and that it is individual in such a sense that it can thrive apart from social progress, have large masses of fact against them.

They are opposed by prophetic religion in its classic embodiment, and by those phases of faith so closely

related to it, modern liberal religion and modern missionary religion. Each of these phases of faith is gaining an increasing hold in our day. A religion inspired by the divine impulse and social passion of the prophets, regulated by the liberal spirit of our scientific age, and resolutely bent upon the universal goal of the modern missionary—that is the religion for the present and the future, the only adequate expression of the mind of Christ. Such a religion calls upon us to abandon those notions so often shared by the social worker and the defender of faith—which at the same time set them at odds—and to think of religion as essentially a progressive and constructive force, and in its innermost meaning as no less social than individual. As an aid to this end let us re-examine some of the reasons by which the notions criticised are commonly sustained.

## II.

We may consider first the reason already mentioned—that religion, being a relation between the soul and God, is intrinsically individual in such a sense that it may really thrive without relating itself to social progress.

Now no examination of this reasoning would be helpful which did not at the outset recognize how great is the value of understanding religion in the personal and individual way. “God and the soul! the soul and its God!”—much of the preciousness of religious experience is summed up in those simple terms. No need of human mediation; each personality has direct access to God. That means spiritual independence. No dismay over outward misfortunes. The soul has an inner life with God. Therein is spiritual strength. No morbidness over not gaining one’s own will; one may will what God wills. This is the entrance to life’s deepest joy. The direct, inward, intimate relation of the soul to God is

one of religion's supreme achievements, gained at the cost of great struggles with dogmatic authority, with the deadness of the letter, with formalism in worship and morals; an achievement never again to be lost so long as the Son of Man finds faith upon the earth.

But when this individual experience of religion becomes sufficient unto itself, so that it monopolizes the idea of religion; so that one may say of social relations, "they are good, but they do not, even at their best, constitute an experience of God"; then we must ask ourselves whether the fullest and deepest meaning of religion is not being allowed to slip away. One says to us, "Behind the veil of sense is an ideal world of divine thought which the soul may find," and we respond, "Let us build a tabernacle there." But may not the divine thought be even now moulding things of sense into an expression of itself? If so, our tabernacle will be located outside of God's workshop. Or one says, "Beneath the perplexing turmoil of human affairs is a realm of light and peace where the soul may dwell"; and we answer, "Let us take refuge there." But what if God himself is in the midst of the human turmoil, illuminating it and shaping it into orderly, peaceful action? Then we shall have fled from the daylight of religion into its twilight. Or one says again, "Out beyond the conflicting, unintelligible stream of life and time is an eternal existence where the soul may have repose"; and we are led to give all our thought and effort to preparing for that existence. But what if, into this very stream of life and time, unclear though it be to us, God is pouring the infinite energy of his love? Then by steering out of that stream we shall have abandoned the means of arriving at whatever good the future has in store. In brief, if God himself is actively in the midst of our social relations, then the soul's most direct experience of God cannot be apart from those relations.

How social relations may constitute an experience of God we may best comprehend from the standpoint of the union between the ideas of God's immanence and his Fatherhood. Immanence is the form in which we are required to think of God by the evolutionary view of the universe. The Christian conception of God as Father best satisfies the ethical view of the universe. Hence one who feels bound to unite evolutionary forms of thought with Christian ideas of value will think of God both as an immanent and as a fatherly God. This means however that God should be thought of as the power moving through the developing world-process toward the realization of a vast conscious purpose, and that this purpose is most clearly seen where men are being fashioned into sonship to God and into a brotherly society. God is in the brotherly society somewhat as the spirit of a transcendent genius is in his disciples. Imagine a great laboratory under the guidance of a Pasteur. Everywhere would be active investigating minds, and everywhere would be the dominating ideas and influence of the master. The inspiring genius would both stimulate the originality of individuals and unify their efforts in a common work. And the more harmonious, and at the same time original, the work of the disciples, the more truly would it be the expression of the inspiring genius. In like manner, only in a far profounder and more intimate degree, God is immanent in the brotherly society. The relation between the immanent God and the human mind is both fuller and freer than in God's immanence in nature, because in the case of man the relation is a moral one. But the relation between the immanent God and the man of filial and brotherly mind is the fullest and freest of all, because here, through moral means, the deepest will of God finds expression.

How then, from this point of view, should we seek the deepest experience of God? First we should ask our-

selves, "What is God now doing in his world? To what end is his loving will most intensely going forth?" And then we should ask, "How may I be taken up into this divine working, and most actively participate in it?" Now we already have dwelt upon the Christian answer to these two questions. It is found in sharing in the work of social progress for the realization of the kingdom of God. But in this answer the contrast between individual religion and social experience drops away. As President King, in his *Theology and the Social Consciousness*, has so truly said: "The very meaning of religion is sharing the life of God. . . . God's life, according to Christ's teaching, is the life of constant and perfect self-giving. To share the life of God, therefore, . . . is to come into the life of loving service. The two fall together from the point of view of the social consciousness."<sup>13</sup> Thus when we say that religion is a relation between the soul and God, we should understand ourselves to mean an active relation to the working God in his effort for social ends.

But this emphasis upon activity as being pre-eminent in religious experience requires us to re-examine another opinion which has underlain the semi-unfriendly relation between religious faith and social progress. This is the opinion that religion is essentially conservative for the reason that it consists primarily of meditation, adoration, and other passive moods.

It would be hard indeed to think of a vital religion which was devoid of these more passive moods. Personal religion can scarcely be separated from conscious worship, from self-surrender, from up-wellings of inward inspiration. But even these phases of religious life fail of their best meaning if they are taken in an exclusively passive sense. And along with these we are coming more and more to emphasize distinctly active experiences as of the utmost importance in religion.

The fundamentally active nature of religious experience at its best is made evident by the Christian idea of faith. It is true that faith has its passive meaning, but that is not its supreme meaning. Faith often requires that we relax and rest back upon God, but it never means a relaxed life. It calls for self-surrender, but that surrender is to the working and self-giving God. Christian faith means loyalty to the cause of bringing to pass a brotherly society on earth in the confidence that it is God's own cause. Hence faith is forward-looking and adventurous. It stimulates activity and releases new energy. It is the spirit of enterprise in the moral world. Of the "faith-state," with the beliefs that accompany it, Professor James says: "We are obliged, on account of their extraordinary influence upon action and endurance, to class them amongst the most important biological functions of mankind."<sup>14</sup> But if this conception of faith be true, it becomes clear how mistaken it is to regard religion as inherently conservative in its social influence.

We are coming, indeed, to recognize that religion, so far from being primarily conservative, is essentially creative in its workings. Professor Hocking, for example, presents religion as "creating men, conferring on them power and freedom to create." He writes: "He who would be creative in any direction would do best to pursue that from which alone creativity can result, a personal knowledge of the Absolute. This is that 'guidance of God' for which men may legitimately pray, and expect an answer. When the holy spirit is come, he shall lead you into all truth; and not otherwise is new truth or new value accessible to mankind."<sup>15</sup> Religion then is to make the soul alert, resourceful, inventive. It is to awaken intuition, to make the mind fertile and the

<sup>14</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 506.

<sup>15</sup> *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, p. 478.

will productive. Its purest essence is seen where there is originality and creativeness in the moral and spiritual realm.

Each one may test this thought for himself. Which is the diviner experience—when the soul is spellbound in the presence of a great religious ideal or fact, or when that same ideal or fact is carrying one on, with however much stress of soul, to its concrete embodiment in deed? Must we not say that the latter exceeds the former by as much as life exceeds mere thought or feeling? As Coleridge, rich of imagination but weak of purpose, falls short of Browning, the union of genius and moral vigor, or as the Brook Farm philosopher falls short of the founder or savior of our nation, so the religion that is merely passive and reflective falls below that which sustains the soul in new activity and in creativeness. Jesus' cry, "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" hushes us with the thought that the eternal will of God was at that moment passing through birth-pangs into deed. And must we not say of every human soul which is straitened until a sense of divine purpose is brought to accomplishment, that in such is being enacted God's highest creative deed?

But now this active and outgoing faith of which we have been speaking, this resourceful, inventive, creative type of living which is religion at its highest—wherein will it find its chief expression? Obviously, in the relation of man to man, in the promotion of social progress. And here we have gained a point of view for revising those opposing judgments: "Save society, and the individual will take care of himself," and "Save the individual, and society will at once be saved." A great part of the perplexities and problems that will confront the minister of the immediate future are comprised in the situations out of which these opposing judgments spring.



With conscientiousness we must ask ourselves what we should do in the midst of such conflicting claims.

Our present generation is discovering that the gospel which aims exclusively at the individual breaks down, because it neglects some of the chief forces by which the individual is shaped. An individual is not something entirely pre-arranged and devised in advance. Not even from the most ideal view of him is this true. An individual is always more or less in the making, and hence susceptible of being played upon by every social force. Now if many of these social forces are themselves unchristian, it is fatuous to leave them unchanged while working for the individual's salvation. If this be done by the ministry and the church, they become like the one or two righteous directors of an unrighteous corporation—powerless to influence the decisive issues. They become unequally yoked together with unbelievers. It is indispensable therefore that religion seek to bring the other social forces into real partnership with itself. Until all the great social forces become Christian in their trend, the work for the salvation of individuals will be fatally weak at critical points. Every wise movement in the cause of social reform and progress is a matter of vital concern to the ministry and the church. The protection of women-laborers, the prevention of child-labor, an adequate standard of living for every wage-earner, the public health, public amusements, an education which shall equip the individual for life, the social settlement and the development of neighborhood life, the moralizing and developing of local self-government, the cause of temperance and the warfare against social vices, the development of rural life by co-operation and by social activities—these and similar causes must have the power of Christianity definitely behind them. Any given minister or church, it is true, may have to do with but few of these movements, perhaps directly with none. But

the Christianity of every community, taken as a whole, should be most directly related to them. Possibly the chief specific work of the ministry and the church will always be the services of worship, religious education, and the culture of family life. Nevertheless, each of these functions should be given a strong social direction and impulse; and ministry and church should be ready to do pioneer social work, inspiring and initiating such work at any point of social need.

The abandoning of the purely individual point of view is all the more necessary, because that point of view misinterprets the very nature of religious forces themselves. Our whole argument goes to show that those forces at their best are social—having a definite social aim and inspiration. Prophetic religion, modern liberal religion, modern missionary religion, are saturated with social passion. If we would bring men into the fellowship of these forms of faith, we must fill their hearts with the same motives, and then focus their efforts upon their own sphere of social influence. To confine the interest of ministry and church to individuals is like pouring hot fluid into thermos bottles. It leaves a vacuum around each soul, which may keep the warmth in for a time, but which prevents both its radiation and its replenishment. An individual is not fully saved until he has the social spirit. He must become part of God's present working for a brotherly society among men, and must bring his own increment of originality and creativeness to that cause, if he is to enter fully into the saved life.

But the effort for social salvation which ignores the individual is also gravely mistaken. The individual furnishes the motive to society, as society affords scope to the individual. A society rationally organized but unconcerned about individuals would be like honeycomb without honey; its richness and sweetness would be

gone. Such a society would gradually lose the values for which it was created. We all know how soulless an institution designed for human welfare may become, how hollow and perfunctory its service, when it ceases to be animated by a warm and direct interest in individual men. The mistake of allowing such interest to evaporate has been too often and egregiously made, and too painfully retrieved, for us to allow our present social movements to make it again. The sense of the preciousness of personality, and of the need of winning each personality into its full development, must remain the only adequate motive for social endeavor.

Moreover, for workers for social progress to ignore the saving of the individual is to confound their own efforts, because the individual embodies the very principle of progress. Speaking from the standpoint of evolution, the individual stands for the element of variation in nature. And the same is true in the moral realm. It is to the individual man who knows salvation for himself that we must look for the swift and sure perception, the prompt and vigorous reaction, by which opportunity is seized and advancement made. In a moral society there must be great numbers of such leaders in larger and smaller spheres, and indeed everyone must be equipped to make his personal and inimitable contribution to the welfare of the whole.

Social progress then needs the service of personal religion. It needs that intensive work in the individual soul which personal religion alone can effect. With the perfecting of our means for securing to all men the values of life there must go a steady renewal and enlargement of those values. Here is a great work for personal religion. With the constant enrichment and complexity of our ideals must go the renewal and the broadening and deepening of our spiritual powers. Here again is a great need for religious faith. And as for social causes

themselves, though they often are dealing with conditions and institutions rather than directly with men, which of them does not gain new meaning from the thought of the infinite worth of the soul, from the sense of the immanent God actively working out his will in this present world, and from the application of Christ's law that only he who loses his life for a great end shall find it?

There is then abundant reason for reversing the opinion that religion is inherently conservative in its influence and mainly individual in its application. For we have seen that while religion is a relation between the soul and God, the God with whom the soul seeks relation is one who is spending the resources of infinite love to bring to pass upon earth a society of brotherly men. Hence a full experience of him means a sharing in that very work. We have seen too that while the soul is to rest back on God in meditation and worship, it also is to become an expression of God's creative will by itself going forward to add its own increment of vital energy and creative originality to the total life of mankind. And we have seen that individual and social salvation must go hand in hand in the thought and effort both of the Christian church and ministry and of the social worker. These conclusions support the one already drawn from the survey of prophetic religion, modern liberal religion, and modern missionary religion. They require us to think of religion as essentially a progressive, constructive, social force. It therefore rests upon us as our privilege and duty to work for the doing away of any unfriendly and divisive spirit between defenders of faith and workers for social progress, and to seek to bring these two great interests into such intimate union that each shall powerfully reinforce the other.